

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL POLICY AND INTERVENTION



# Alcohol Misuse Among UK Teenagers – A Policy Response

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# Today's Outline

- Problematizing alcohol misuse – For *whom* is it a problem? *Why* is it a problem?
  - Socio-Cultural Differences
  - Public Health Issues
- Costs of Alcohol Misuse
- Overview of Current UK Government Alcohol Strategy
- Policy Proposal
  - Stakeholders analysis
  - Funding, Trade-Offs, Constraints and Barriers
- Q & A

# Problematizing Misuse

# Problematising 'Misuse'

- Misuse can be understood differently depending on how one approaches it:
  - Legal: precise limits on alcohol consumption and age limits by law
  - Social: How, when, and where a person drinks, and with whom
  - Public health: Specific daily and weekly limits on what is 'acceptable' drinking as set out by the NHS
- Alcohol misuse accounts for 10% of deaths for individuals between the ages of 15-29 globally (WHO, 2010)
- For the purposes of this policy proposal, alcohol misuse will be understood as excessive consumption, or binge drinking or weekly consumption by children under 16.
- This behavior has wider implications on society :
  - Public health concerns
  - Drunk-driving
  - Anti-social or unacceptable behavior
  - Increased criminal behavior
  - Alcohol-related violence

## The Dialogue with the Problem

- **Why it is a problem? (causes and effects)**
- **Whose problem it is? (identifying stakeholders)**
- **When it is a problem**
- **Where it is a problem?**

# Misuse as Binge Drinking

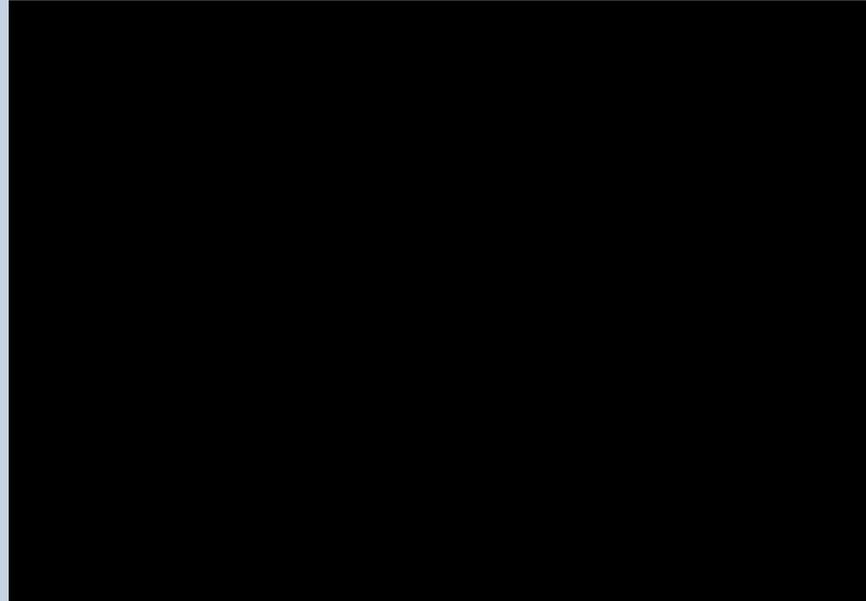
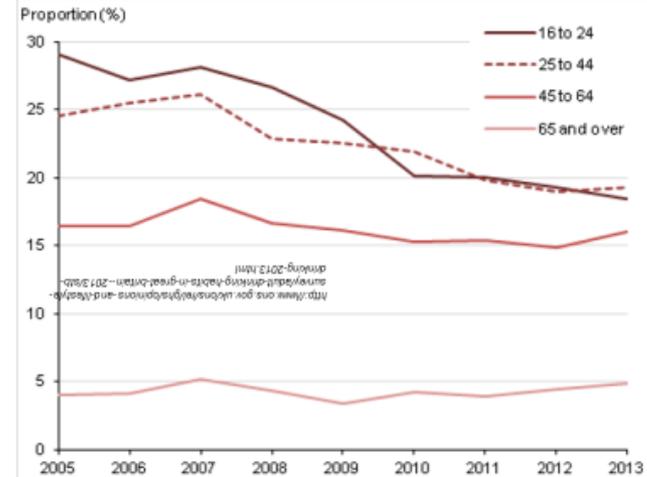


Figure 6: Binge drinking among adults, by age, Great Britain, 2005-2013

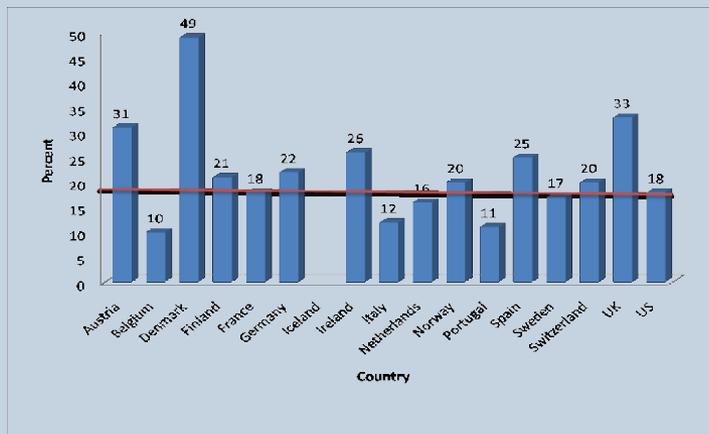


Source: Opinions and Lifestyle Survey, General Lifestyle Survey, General Household Survey - Office for National Statistics

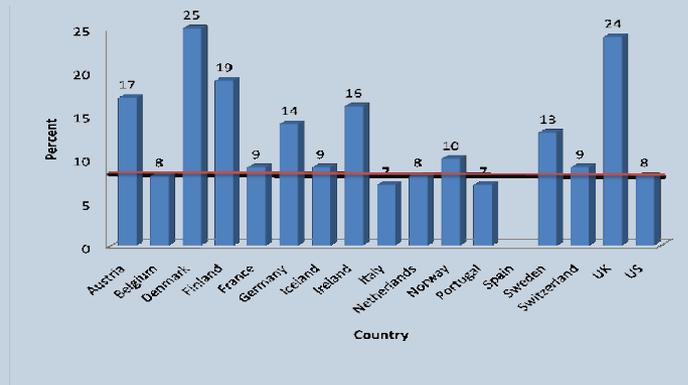
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7cwEd7hJ4z8&t=198s>

# Trends – Social Factors

**Figure 2: Percent of 15-16 Year Olds Reporting Intoxication in the Last 30 Days<sup>2</sup>**



**Figure 3: Percent of 15-16 Year Olds Reporting Intoxication before Age 13<sup>3</sup>**



## Reasons to drink

The most common reason pupils thought people of their own age drank alcohol was to look cool in front of their friends (79%).

are bored and have nothing to do  
It helps them relax

Percent

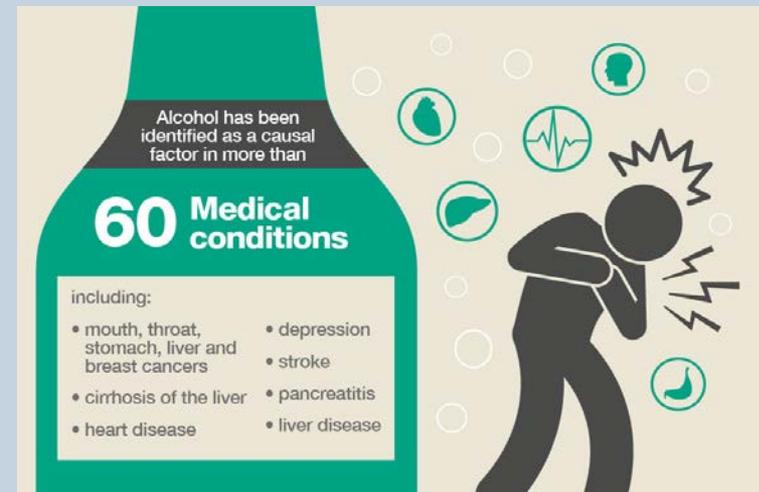
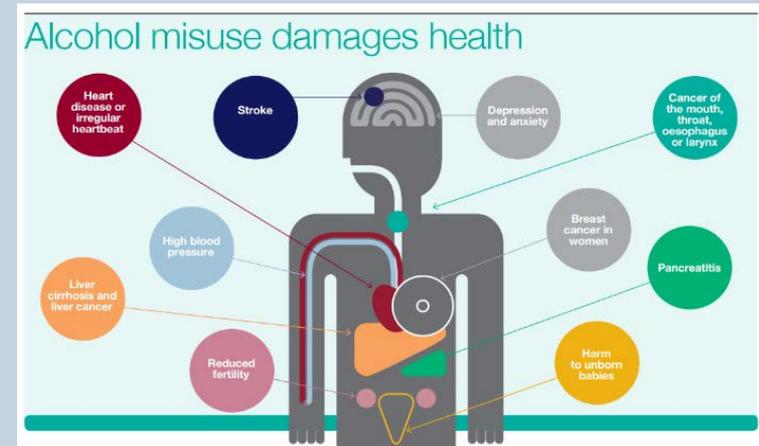
## Where pupils drank

Pupils who drank alcohol were most likely to say they did so at home (56%), at parties with friends (46%) or at someone else's home (43%). 7% said they usually drank at a pub or bar.

# Costs of Teenage Alcohol Misuse

# Teenage Alcohol Misuse as a Public and Social Concern

- Alcohol misuse among teens can cause serious health and social problems in the short and long term (Youth Alcohol Action Plan, 2008):
  - Risky behavior (unprotected sex, increased substance abuse)
  - Damage to brain development
  - Teenage pregnancy
  - Failing at school – (ex. Almost half of young people excluded from schools in the UK are regular drinkers)
  - Truancy
- There is evidence that regular alcohol use, binge drinking and other risk-taking behaviors such as smoking, substance use and risky sexual behavior emerge in adolescence and that these behaviors tend to cluster together (Marshall, 2014).
- Given this, a focus on educating teenagers about the risks of alcohol abuse should be a top priority of public health strategies**



# NHS Review: Teenage Alcohol Misuse Adverse Consequences (2014)

**Table 6.16**  
**Adverse consequences of drinking in the last four weeks, by sex**

*Pupils who were drunk in the last four weeks* 2014

Adverse consequences of drinking <sup>a</sup>	Sex		
	Boys	Girls	Total
	%	%	%
Felt ill or sick	27	39	34
Vomited	15	21	19
Had argument	16	28	23
Clothes or other items damaged	19	17	18
Lost money or other items	16	15	16
Had fight	10	6	8
Trouble with police	5	4	4
Taken to hospital	1	-	0
<i>Unweighted bases<sup>b</sup></i>	<i>183</i>	<i>245</i>	<i>428</i>
<i>Weighted bases<sup>b</sup></i>	<i>184</i>	<i>255</i>	<i>438</i>

- <sup>a</sup> Percentages total more than 100, because pupils could give more than one answer.
- <sup>b</sup> Bases are shown for those who answered whether they felt ill or sick after drinking. Other bases are of a similar magnitude.

**Table 6.17**  
**Adverse consequences of drinking in the last four weeks, by number of times pupils were drunk in the last four weeks**

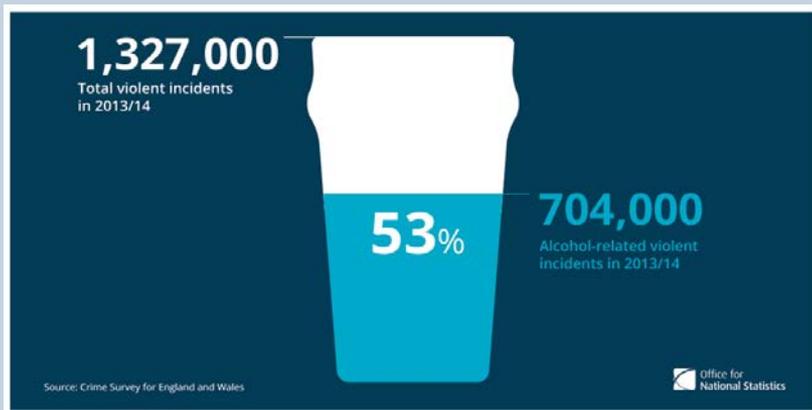
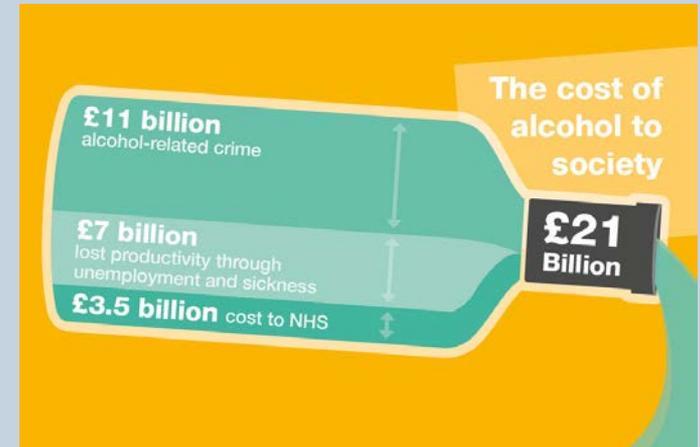
*Pupils who were drunk in the last four weeks* 2014

Adverse consequences of drinking <sup>a</sup>	Number of times drunk in the past four weeks		
	Once or twice	Three or more times	Total <sup>b</sup>
	%	%	%
Felt ill or sick	34	33	34
Vomited	17	24	19
Had argument	20	31	23
Clothes or other items damaged	15	26	18
Lost money or other items	13	24	16
Had fight	6	14	8
Trouble with police	3	9	4
Taken to hospital	-	2	0
<i>Unweighted bases<sup>c</sup></i>	<i>318</i>	<i>110</i>	<i>428</i>
<i>Weighted bases<sup>c</sup></i>	<i>329</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>438</i>

- <sup>a</sup> Percentages total more than 100, because pupils could give more than one answer.
- <sup>b</sup> Total column includes pupils who did not say how many times they were drunk in the last four weeks.
- <sup>c</sup> Bases are shown for those who answered whether they felt ill or sick after drinking. Other bases are of a similar magnitude.

# Societal Costs of Alcohol Misuse

- There are a number of costs associated with alcohol misuse:
  - Loss of working years of life
  - Increased costs to the NHS (greater later life medical costs and disease / cancer)
  - Lost productivity to businesses
  - Increased alcohol-related crime -- More than 50% of violent incidents involving adults were alcohol-related according to the Crime Survey for England and Wales and 27% of social services serious case reviews involve alcohol misuse (ONS Crime Survey).



# Overview of UK Government Alcohol Policy

# 2008 Government Alcohol Strategy

## Five Priorities

- 1) Stepping up enforcement activity to address young people drinking in public places
- 2) Taking action with industry on young people and alcohol
- 3) Developing a national consensus on young people and drinking
- 4) Establishing a new partnership with parents on teenage drinking
- 5) Supporting young people to make sensible decisions about alcohol

**These priorities are preventative but do not fully address *social risk factors* contributing to alcohol misuse**

# Youth Alcohol Action Plan (2008): Lack of Response from the Social Perspective?

“To date we do not have a single coordinating government approach to addressing youth people’s alcohol consumption – tackling wider forms of unacceptable drinking as well as considering *why* young people drink and what role their *parents* can play”

**Do the aforementioned five priorities address this problem?**

# UK Government Responses (2012): Three Perspectives

## Market

- Raise alcohol duty by 2% each year
- Higher taxes for higher alcohol content
- Working with Advertising Standards Agency and Ofcom to reduce teenage exposure to advertising

## Legal

- Doubling the maximum fine for selling alcohol to minors (20,000 pounds)
- Police have the ability to seize alcohol from young people
- Possibility for prosecution for possession in public

## Social

- Enabling parents to understand their impact on children's attitudes towards alcohol
- 'Supportive relationships, strong ambitions, good opportunities'
- **Good schools to promote health and wellbeing**

# Decentralizing the Problem

*“Local communities, services, and businesses are best placed to tackle alcohol related issues in their area and enforce the behavior and develop the cultures that they want” (UK Government Strategy 2012)*

## **This means:**

- Public health grants to local authorities
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessments with NHS, local councils, and communities
- Directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners

# Policy Proposal

# Policy Proposal: Overview

<b>Policy</b>	Community-based alcohol education program implemented within schools
<b>Aim</b>	Reduce alcohol misuse among teens
<b>Who</b>	Students (12 – 17 years), Parents
<b>Where</b>	Secondary schools
<b>When</b>	Pilot: December 2018 – May 2019
<b>Feasibility</b>	Medium to High
<b>Costs</b>	Funding through existing government agencies
<b>Partners</b>	Schools, local police authorities, local health representatives, charities

Expanded from: Alcohol Evaluation Trust case studies and evaluations

# Policy Proposal: Objectives and Design

## Objectives

- Educate and re-educate youths ( age 12-17) and their families around the harms of binge-drinking and intoxication from alcohol through direct engagement in workshops
- Short-term outcome: increased awareness among targeted students and their parents
- Long-term outcome: decrease in alcohol misuse among targeted ages, and change in dialogue around alcohol use



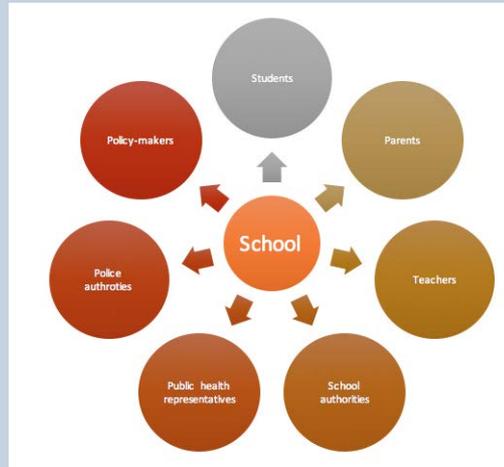
## Design

- Community based approach through biannual ‘workshop week’ within schools involving:
  - Teachers
  - Parents
  - Representatives from local medical practices/hospitals
  - Local police authorities
- National government will provide guideline on timeframe, stages, and budget
  - Advisory committee – members from dept. of education with collaboration dept. of health and ministry of justice
  - Implemented at the local level by selected schools

# Policy Proposal: Impact and Stakeholders

## Impact

- Network approach - Involves entire community
- Workshops - direct engagement and interactive approach
- Cross-network effects – reduced costs in terms of:
  - crime prevention (e.g. vandalism, violence, incarceration);
  - health costs (e.g. intoxication, unplanned pregnancy, mental health);
  - school outcomes (e.g. absences, dropouts, special needs);
  - later life outcomes (e.g. skills, career)



## Supporters

- Schools and parents
- Public health and criminal justice representatives
- Local community
- Youth support organizations

## Opponents

- Young people - involved in misuse
- Parents - who might not want to be told how to parent
- School board – concerned about how to implement into the curriculum (time constraints)

# Policy Proposal: Implementation

## School Selection

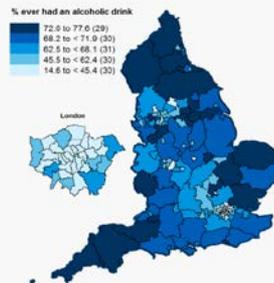
Prioritizing school selection based on prevalence of drinking by region. Addressing state-schools in metropolitan areas in first three at-risk categories, regional districts will determine how to select schools.

- There are 3268 secondary state schools in the UK (Dept. of Education, 2012)
- Target 300 schools for 1<sup>st</sup> year
- Evaluate medium-term impact after 2<sup>nd</sup> year and decide whether to expand

### Drinking prevalence by LA

Barnsley District (77.6%), Devon (76.9%) and Cornwall (76.6%) had the highest prevalence of 15 year olds who have ever drunk alcohol.

The Borough of Tower Hamlets (14.6%) had the lowest.

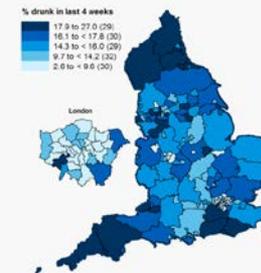


For more information: [Tables 6.13 and 6.36, Chapter 6, WAY Survey 2014](#)  
[What About YOUth? Survey 2014](#)

### Drunkenness by LA

Brighton and Hove (27.0%), North Tyneside (24.6%) and Richmond upon Thames (24.5%) had the highest prevalence of drunkenness in the last 4 weeks.

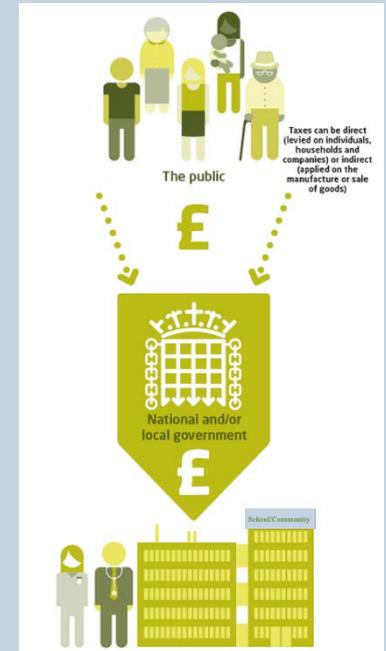
Tower Hamlets (2.6%) and Newham (3.1%) had the lowest.



32

# Policy Proposal: Funding

- Government Departments:
  - Department for Communities and Local Government
  - Department for Education
  - Department of Health (PHE)
  - NHS – former funding channel
- Local: Regional and Community governments
- Charities: Alcohol Education Trust, Alcohol Research UK
- Private Companies: e.g. Diageo
- Timeline: 2-year project, implement two workshops in Dec 2018 and May 2019, evaluate in May 2020



  
Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

  
Department  
for Education

  
Department  
of Health



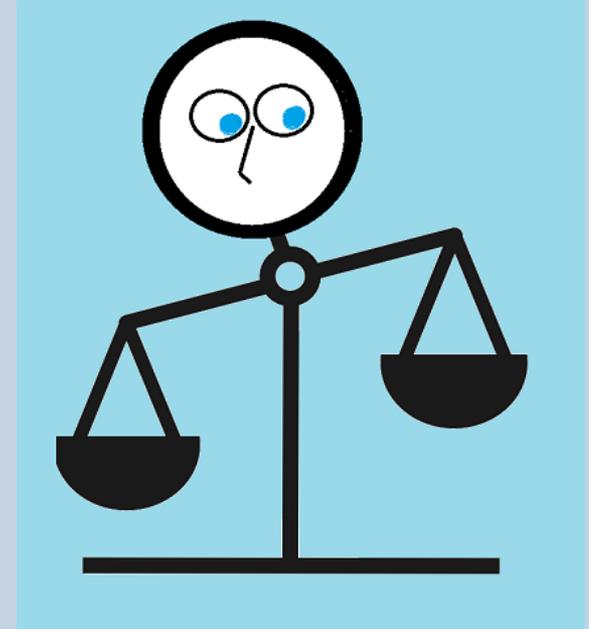
# Policy Proposal: Constraints and Barriers

- Stakeholders: teenagers, parents, authorities, teachers/doctors, alcohol companies
- School-based intervention coverage problem
- Targeting certain (cognitive or social) determinants in education programs may result in the omission of others important factors
- The effect of the intervention is long-term: how can we measure short-term effects and convince the authorities to secure funding?
- Alcohol production companies may covertly undermine programs through media and advertising practices
- How to allocate funding (e.g. between schools, teachers, and doctors)



# Policy Proposal: Trade-offs

- What is the priority:
  - Protection of population health and reduction of social risks?  
vs.
  - Government and private revenue?
- Public health measures to reduce harmful use of alcohol are sometimes judged to be in conflict with other goals like free markets and consumer choice and can be seen as harming economic interests and reducing government revenues.



Conclusion

+

Q&A

# References

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